

Carol Van Lu Interview with Larry –

Q – Can you tell me when you started at the college?

C – Ah, yes. In October of 1968.

Q – You remember the month?

C – You bet, because my father died that week.

Q – Okay, so you remember that. What was your title then, if you had one?

C – I think the title was executive secretary, you know I was classified.

Q – That is probably as high as you can get as classified.

C – Well, no. I moved higher up later on, that's where I started out.

Q – And then, you worked until – can you give me your closing date?

C – It was October 1984. When I transferred up to the state board office.

Q – Oh, you went to the state board in 1984 after you left here?

C – Yes.

Q – I believe you followed Don McGinnis to Denver.

C – Right.

Q – When you left you were still executive secretary?

C – Ah, no, my title at that time was staff assistant.

Q – Hopefully it paid more than executive secretary, staff assistant.

C – Yes.

Q – What I would be interested in is what you remember about the early years. I know the classes started in 69, correct? And you were here before that. Anything at all about the first president, then you worked for Don McGinnis – anything interesting that you recall – wonderful.

C – Well, you want me to just start?

Q – Yes, yes, you just talk and I'm going to write down, the tape is recording.

C – My first day at work I was greeted by Leonard Smith and Don Siek. Leonard being the vocational person and...

Q – Wait, wait, wait – let me write this down.

C – And Dr. Hatten, the president, happened to be out of town that day so I didn't meet him until the next day. I had taken the test to get into the classified system and was interviewed by the president and the chairman of the college council and some other people from the classified system before I got the job and then I came to work in a rented building on East Las Vegas Street.

Q – Is that 5 East Las Vegas?

C – Yes.

Q – And that's where you worked?

C – Yes, we had half of the building, the first and second floors. The first floor we had several offices, about two or three offices. The second floor was all one big room. We did everything up there. We had coffee breaks up there, we had a place where we mimeographed papers, and collated and all that stuff. We did the first policy manual up there.

Q – First policy manual?

C – Which was typed on a typewriter on stencils and mimeographed.

Q – Which I don't think they use...

C – No – and we had the purple breast, too. We had one of those ditto machines that prints out purple. You remember that?

Q – I believe I do. Printed on purple...

C – We had no computers.

Q – Yeah, that's why we need to get this down. Okay.

C – Lets see, Dr. Hatten, the first president, was a very interesting person. He was quite reserved until you got to know him. Seemed rather unapproachable, but once you got to know him he was real different and real friendly. And he was quite brilliant. A very, what the word I want, pretty authoritative type executive.

Q – That was his style of management?

C – Well, let me see – you want some anecdotes, I'm sure. We spent that first year finding buildings that we could rent and use for classroom space and so forth – we found the old safeway store, which became known as safeway tech.

Q – Yes, I have heard of that. Now, the library was there, was there anything else in that safeway.

C – The first year there were classrooms.

Q – You don't know who first dubbed it safeway tech? Were there other terms, highway tech or anything like that?

C – Safeway tech was the only one I heard. Lets see, did we build that building? The next door building? Ah, anyway, I think we did build that second building because the night before, or the day that classes started, and I think it was the second year – and we were going to have classes and we still didn't have any locks on the doors.

Q – No locks?

C – (laughing), we didn't tell anybody til we could get them installed.

Q – You have to be careful with exams and stuff.

C – Yes, but the night before classes Don Siek and Leonard Smith and all these high paid executives are over there doing the last minute work to get ready for class. Registration was done by hand. Joan Burton could tell you a lot about that if you wanted to talk to her. Used to be Joan Harper and then she got married and changed her name... Let me see, Dr. Hatten, Len Smith, and Don Siek and Fred Struthers took a trip that first fall through the mid west where they visited various community colleges so they could get ideas and so forth.

Q – Before the first classes started?

C – Right. And then when they got back they started looking for the buildings and we rented the buildings and we started hiring faculty and hired other administrators, we hired student services, we hired Dr. Ross, Frank Ross. The registrar, Newcomer I think was the first registrar. Well, you know I can't give you exact dates and times, but in the early years a student government was started and there was a young man named Lance Weider. Did you know Lance Weider?

Q – No.

C – Well Lance was a very interesting person. A great big heavy set fellow, eventually married a girl who worked for the college, she was also heavy set – and Lance was very active in the student government and he also worked for the college, work study or something. I don't know that we had work study yet, but he worked part time, carried the mail around, stuff like that. He was real instrumental in the student government and I remember, I am not sure how much was Lance's doing, but I think he's the one who suggested the ardvark.

Q – I need to know that, yes. And was there a meaning behind that, a story?

C – No, as far as I know it was just a whimsical, a very whimsical, students, they regarded themselves as a little different than everyone else. They chose black and blue for the school colors, and I wrote, when it was reported to the president's cabinet in the minutes, I wrote blue and black 'cause I thought black and blue sounded a little strange and I was corrected by the students. The correct order was black and blue because they had graduated from the school of hard knocks!

Q – Ah, were many of these students Vietnam vets? In '69 it seems to me that the war was winding down.

C – Oh, I am sure we had some vets coming back but I don't remember a significant number of vets. We had a lot of military because we offered classes at Fort Carson.

Q – But you don't know that they had come, that they had just returned.

C – In fact, the very first classes we offered in the summer of '69 out at Fort Carson, automotive classes – I think they were at Fort Carson. That was before we opened this college in the fall! The first enrollment was way over what had been anticipated by the state and Dr. Hatten was somewhat non-plussed 'cause he got balled out for that – pardon...

Q – Didn't it bring any money?

C – Well, it didn't bring in extra money, that was the problem – they only funded us for 850, I think

Q – 850.

C – and we got like 1200, I can't remember...

Q – That kinda stretched the resources –

C – We thought we were doing a good job! (laughing)

Q – I would think so –

C – Ah, let's see, the first college council – the chairman who interviewed me was William Marshall and he was a prominent insurance person in Colorado Springs and had been very much involved with getting the college established in Colorado Springs and stayed with the college on the council for a long time, a good many years and was a staunch supporter of the college. Tom Moon was a banker (Moon), and he was another chairman. Betty Marie Bernstein, who later divorced and took her maiden name back and

became Betty Marie Diet, was on the council, Robert Smith, who was a doctor, and Norman Fletcher, who was big in labor circles.

Q – Is that Buzz?

C – No, Buzz Wilder came on later – those were the first 5, the first council.

Q – Fletcher is not involved anymore?

C – I think not, but he stayed on a long, long time. And Buzz Wilder was on and he left us to become an aid to Governor L---, and eventually ended up on the state board, I am not sure if he is still on the state board or not, he was a couple years ago. He was also a state legislator. So he was one of the acting on people. Lets see, Bill Lightengood and Leonard Smith built the first weld shop. And lets see, there was a piece of equipment that was on the top of Pikes Peak that, I think it belonged to the US Government, some kind of weather thing up there and they said we could have it if we could get it down off the mountain, so Leonard got the military to bring that down for us, and they got stuck half way down the road, Leonard was out of town, his secretary had to get on the phone – Beverly Baker, and they called, who did they call in? Was it the air force came in?? (laughs) to get that thing out of the ditch. And I can't remember what it was – it was a great big heavy piece of equipment. And Beverly's gone, she died three or four years ago, so she can't tell us, but they finally got it down off the mountain.

Q – Well, they carried it half way down before getting stuck.

C – Well, it was on, I don't know, a tractor trailer or something.

Q – They didn't need to be rescued, did they?

C – Well, no it wasn't that serious, they just got stuck and couldn't get – I can't remember if the weather turned bad on them or what. Well, Leonard Smith was very innovative and he had great ideas about how to get the kind of support we needed to do the kinds of things..., he was the first vocational director and he was always coming up with something like that. That was one of his early projects, bringing that piece of equipment down off of Pikes Peak. Lets see, tell you about the first...the first president of the student government became a lawyer.

Q – You don't remember his name, do you?

C – He wrote a letter to the president, who at that time was Don McGinnis, telling him when he got his law degree – Steve...Steve...I might have found that letter in the files at one time but probably not now.

Q – We might have it in the archives or someone else might remember.

C – Yes, because I tried to send things like that over to the library for the archives so you may very well have it back there.

Q – Its possible that Siek might remember or Struthers might recall that incident, okay. Becoming a lawyer, wow.

C – In the first, in the early years, the state board, the faculty, were angling for some kind of organization to represent them, of course they wanted it to be the CEA. But the state board was not into unions, and they established in their policy the right for the employees to have a shared governance organization.

Q – So that's how SGA started.

C – Right. And there was to be a committee which would include faculty, students, administrators, and classified people to form this organization and I was on that committee. Leonard Smith, president of the student government at that time who was military, and he was chairman of the committee, and I will tell you he ran a tough meeting. I can't remember what his name was either. And lets see, Roger somebody who was a councilor, Leonard Smith, Fred Struthers, Jane Green, who was I think an English teacher –

Q – Jim Green?

C – Jane.

Q – Oh, Jim taught history

C – Was Jim Green on that – might have been, there were about nine or ten of us I think, and we wrote the policy that setup the rules for shared Governance based on what the state board policy said we would be allowed to do. And that committee met, and we had a couple other students, too, besides one who was chairman. At the very last minute, the faculty became disenchanted and some of the minority faculty complained that there were no minorities on it, so after we had this whole thing written they added two faculty who were minorities to the committee and we had a deadline and we had like two days to rewrite this whole thing and get everybody to agree to it. The last night, we were still sitting over in the council room at 2 O'clock in the morning rewriting this document and getting everybody to agree to what it said.

Q – Did it have to be rewritten entirely from scratch?

C – Well, we had to go over the whole thing and get everybody to agree on all the points in it or rewrite it in such a way that they would agree.

Q – Of course, at two in the morning! And where was that meeting held?

C – In the council room over in the Chivano building on, ah?

Q – On Bott?

C – We had all those buildings named after mountains and the Chivano building was on Bott Street.

Q – On Bott, okay – how many buildings were on Bott, I'm not sure of...?

C – Just that one, the machine shop was down behind.

Q – Okay, now how does the safeway building compare with this Chivano building.

C – Well, it became a classroom building the first year and then the library moved in there and they had some offices there.

Q – Okay, so there was one building then.

C – Yes, and we called that, I think we called that the Ontaro building and then the one we built next door to it we called the Blanca building and then there was one across the street and it began with a C, but I can't remember what the C stood for. So then, when we moved to the new campus we also gave those buildings, they were A, B, C and I forgotten what we called those.

Q – Do you recall who those two minority people were?

C – You know I can see the one just as clear...

Q – Was it Lou Cortez?

C – No. Well, it might have been, Lou might have been one of them.

Q – Lou was here from the beginning, he was a councilor, could Cortez have been one?

C – I don't know – but there was a teacher, a man, who I think was Hispanic – Barros?

Q – Judy Barros?

C – Well, she married him – he became a dentist. So he was on that, he was one of the minorities.

Q – And Judy I believe is married to him now?

C- Could be –

Q – Well, there are two brothers, Barros brothers.

C – Right, and the one that Judy married was the one put on the committee, I can't remember what his first name was. I wouldn't have thought I would even remember...

Q – I spoke to Judy, she would be able to tell me.

C – Yes, Goodall, Judy Goodall I think was her name before she married him.

Q – Oh -

C – Ah, let me see, what else can I tell you that is...of course eventually Dr. Hatten left – there was a difference of opinion about how the college should be organized and I think you might call it a turf war. The director of occupational education in Denver insisted that the director of occupational education at the colleges should report directly to the president of the college and Dr. Hatten had promoted Fred Struthers to be Dean of Instruction and he had both director of general studies and the director of occupational education reporting directly to Fred Struthers and that's part of what began the whole battle and in the end Dr. Hatten was forced out and left the college and he was, I guess you gotta say he was fired by the state board, but the college council rehired him.

Q – Rehired him - After how long?

C – Immediately! They rehired him as chief administrator and it, I can't remember if it went to court or not but the decision was made that the state board governed the college and the college council was advisory only and they didn't have the authority to rehire him.

Q – Now, wasn't the faculty involved at all? I understand that they organized...

C – Oh, from the beginning, you know, the faculty did their thing as being in opposition to a great many things the administration was trying to do. I don't know, though, that they were particularly influential in getting Dr. Hatten fired.

Q- Well, what can you say about the story that Dr. Hatten fired the history dept.

C – Oh!

Q – I've heard, I mean Jim Green will tell me that...

C – That first year – Jim Green and Bob Leonard, they were the two history instructors and Fred Struthers decided to, well, he was the director of general studies Fred was – he could tell you about that, too. He recommended that we, ah, cut back the history department because we didn't have enough students.

Q – No need for history –

C – No – we could hire part time instructors to handle the number of students we had and the faculty saw that as a ploy to get rid of two of the hot-beds, the hot-headed leaders – and who am I to say who was right? (laughing). But, the administration backed-off and kept them on.

Q – They stayed on – or they came back.

C – Yes.

Q – I have heard that was kind of the beginning of the faculty association?

C – Oh, I'm sure it was. John Huff was the first president of the faculty association – did you know that?

Q – I knew that he had been very active and I intend to talk to John. Dr. Hatten was a history major, was he not?

C – Yes, he taught history.

Q – At the college?

C – No – before he became an administrator. And he went back to teaching history eventually – he retired from Port Huron Community College in Port Huron Michigan – which is a college he founded – he was the founding president of that college before he went to Oregon as state director and then came here as founding president of Pikes Peak. Now, when he left Pikes Peak he went to Marshall University in West Virginia? Where they were starting a vocational program but he didn't stay there very long. He ended up going back home to Port Huron and that's where he retired from. I have followed him because his wife and I were good friends and we still are. She comes to Denver to see her daughter and we get together all the time.

Q – Okay, so Mrs. Hatten doesn't live in the Springs then?

C – No, she lives in Port Huron, MI.

Q – But, she does, she comes to Denver. I don't know who told me, maybe they were talking about someone else, I thought somebody said that – Okay, that you kept in touch with her, maybe that's what it was. But not that she was in the Springs, okay.

C – His son lived in the Springs for a long time, but I think he is down in Pueblo now. So then we hired Don, well, then Don Siek became acting president, interim president, whatever you want to call it, so I worked for Don during that period of time. Great person to work for – we had lots of interesting things happen during that time because we were trying to get the land for the college. Dr. Hatten had been instrumental in getting the Federal government to declare that land surplus and offer to give it to us.

Q – You're talking about the south campus, Centennial, where we are now?

C – Yes. It was part of Fort Carson and they declared it surplus.

Q – What year are we talking about?

C – Ah, probably 73-74? So, when we began to say we were going to get that land and build a new campus out there the man who owned the majority of buildings we were renting started a campaign to keep us where we were and he kept saying, he wanted the state to buy those buildings from him. Well, you know, they weren't a campus, they were just a hodge podge of buildings that had been sort of renovated to make them appropriate for our use – and they were in a flood plain, they were in a flood of, is that Fountain Creek that runs through there? So, we had a big battle up before the state legislature. He tried to get a bill passed that said something to the effect that they would have to buy those buildings and we wouldn't be allowed to build a new building and I remember at the 7th hour - Dr. Hatten had written a little history of our efforts to get land for the college and so somebody on the faculty came over and said we are going up to the state legislature tomorrow and we need to get them information about what has been going on. I told him I had this thing that Dr. Hatten had written but of course it wasn't up

to date because Hatten had been gone for about a year. Some more things had happened since then. So I told Mr. Siek I could make copies of this, but I said we need to update it and he says we won't have time to update it now – its like 4 O'clock in the afternoon. I said I'll update it, I'll take it home tonight and I'll do it on my typewriter at home. So I took some stencils home and I wrote a little more history about what had happened and added it to this thing Dr. Hatten had written and we ran off copies the next morning and he brought it up to Denver with him and handed it out to the state legislators and they all said we didn't know you had gone through all this trying to get land, da dat da da...and they kicked the whole thing out and we got our land.

Q – Did you stay up late at night?

C – Oh, boy, did I!

Q – Did that land ever get flooded?

C – I don't know if it ever has or not.

Q – I mean while we were there.

C – Oh, no, but we had some water in the building sometimes when we had real hard rains. Don Siek could tell you about that. I was going to tell you this funny story – One day we came back from lunch and there was one of the shops, I think it was the auto shop. One wall, it was just a blank concrete wall that faced out onto – whats that street that goes out to Manitou Springs – the old town center?

Q – Not Colorado.

C – Anyway, it faced out there and there is a lot of traffic and we came back and we heard this owner of the building had someone come out there and paint on the side of that building, and at that time we were El Paso Community College. He had painted El Paso Community College, West Siders built it, keep it here.

Q – Oh, it was a campaign.

C – And we are going huh? And Dean Brisinger was head of the auto shop at the time and he called up and said have you seen this da dat da da! And so we all go running and looked out the window and Mr. Siek was acting president and he was out to lunch. He comes back and I said have you seen whats on the auto shop!?! Go look out your window, go look out your window! So he goes walking out and I follow him, he doesn't know I am there – and you know, Don Siek was the perfect gentleman and so he looks out the window and he says that son of a bitch!

Q – That was something for Don.

C – And he came back in, picked up the phone, called up Paul Simmons, who was head of maintenance and he says I want the wall of the auto shop painted in the next thirty minutes – white. Paul went over there and painted it all out.

Q – In thirty minutes?

C – You bet. And Dean Risenger came back from lunch and it was gone and Don Siek called him up and says what do you mean there is a sign on the side of your building?! And the next week, the painter came in and wanted to know if we would verify to Byron Trish that he had painted it because Byron was not going to pay him. You never painted the signed he said.

Q – So the - never picked up on that because the sign wasn't on that –

C – No, it was gone! And I said to Don Siek, I said are you allowed to do that? I said He owns the building? Dons says you bet we can do it, our contract with him says we are in charge of that building, not him. So that's one of the funny anecdotes about that little period of time. Lets see, then we hired Don McGinnis – he just retired from Portland Community college a couple years ago. I had occasion to write a little poem to be read at his retirement party and so I put in a lot of cute little anecdotes about things that happened to him when he was president when he was here. One of the funny things that happened was in the very early years, before we had moved out to the new campus in fact. The joint budget committee of the state legislature visited our campus and of course, college council was there and all sorts of important people and everything, and we did a little what Mr. McGinnis called a dog and pony show – so we got up and showed them, told them all about different parts of the campus, but the funny thing was Norman Fledger had a suit that was brown plaid – I mean it wasn't just a plain navy blue suit or black suit, brown plaid. McGinnis walked in with the identical suit on!!

Q – Oh my gosh, and they had not planned this?

C – No!

Q – What did they say to each other?

C – Well, I don't know but McGinnis said to me later there is nothing like walking in with the same suit your boss has on! So that was a funny happening.

C – One time we got in the mail from Coast Community college a little redwood tree – just a sprig with a root on it. Apparently they sent them out to all the community colleges that had something to do with their college – I don't remember what the occasion was that they would send this to us but they sent us this little redwood tree. Of course, McGinnis was from the West coast, and so I said isn't that great! We'll plant this little redwood tree, I said we'll have a redwood tree right here on our campus – he says they won't live anywhere besides on the west coast, it'll die – I said really? He said, yeah, it'll die in six weeks. Well, Betty Fisk was sitting there – do you remember Betty? She worked for Don Siek in the early years. She probably was forced to retire, probably about early 70s. Anyway, she was a sweet, sweet lady – just died in January, bless her heart. She was 87 when she died, went to bed one night just didn't wake up. Up to that point, active, came to our retirement luncheons and everything. But, anyway, she was sitting there when he said that tree will die in six weeks and she said it will not!! Betcha I can keep it alive! He said if you keep that tree alive for six weeks I'll take you to lunch. She said you're on! So she took the tree and put it on her desk and gave it tender loving care and that little tree just smiled and perked and grew, and McGinnis would walk by, everytime he would walk past it he would say die tree!! Well, six weeks came and the tree was absolutely gorgeous, so he had to take Betty to lunch and two days later the tree fell over and died!

C – When we moved out to the new campus it was so cold in Don McGinnis' office that he froze to death. He kept calling Don Siek every morning and “its freezing in here, when are you going to get this fixed?” And Don kept calling the mechanical engineer people in and architects and finally one morning, Don McGinnis had an outside door which the architects – they put that door in there because it was suggested that the person needed an escape route! (laughing). So, one morning we came in, there had been a snow

storm the night before – there is snow piled up in the corner on the inside of this outside door. Whats more, two hours later it hadn't melted yet! So, every morning when McGinnis would call Siek to complain about how cold it was in there Don would come running over and he'd show him the thermometer would say 68 degrees – and he'd say, yeah, that's because you painted a red line on that thermometer! Well, when the snow came and wouldn't melt Siek got the architect involved and I don't remember what they did but they fixed it. Well, one thing they had to do, the fans that blew the warm air, they had to add some, there wasn't enough to get the warm air down to our end of the building.

Q – Were you cold?

C – I wasn't as cold as he was, but it wasn't real warm!

Q – You were right outside his office?

C – Yeah. And let me see – we had the hassle with the student newspaper, and, trying to think...

Q – The advisor was, ah?

C – Judith Olsen. That went to the supreme court!

Q – The state or the US?

C – The US.

Q – Wow!

C – The student government cut off the funds to the student newspaper because they didn't like some of the stuff they were printing – and the student newspaper sued because they said their rights were being bridged, whatever. This was students against students, not the administration against students, because the administration gave them money to the student government – the student government then apportioned it out to the various student organizations, including the student newspaper, so they just withdrew their funds!

Q – But, now, wasn't there a staff person who would have been in charge?

C – Well, Judith Olsen, oh, you mean to the student government? Probably Bob Henry.

Q – So, Judy was very involved – did Bob get involved?

C – Yeah, I think he did.

Q – But not the administration as such?

C – Well, I think they tried to stay out of it.

Q – No heavy handed decision making –

C – No, I can't remember what the final outcome was – that's terrible I can't remember that! I think the student government won...

Q – I believe they won, all that's in the archives, I'm sure they won. But the supreme court! Who paid for all these proceedings?

C – Maybe the union, I don't know. But it was a very interesting thing. I'll bet Maryellen McElnery, who is the director of legal affairs for the state community college system, and was, well, I think she was around at the time the appeals were going through. She was not our attorney at the time – but she worked in the attorney generals office before she came to the college system and I bet she could tell you – but I am sure it was the US supreme court. And it was watched nationally because they wanted to see if it was really students vs. students and that the administration was not indirectly involved.

Q – So, in a sense, was it a censorship issue, the fact that their funds were cut off?

C – Well, in a way because they cut them off because they didn't like some of the stuff they were printing. We did have an issue with them one time because we had a scandal which I am not going to go into on the record but the newspaper was ready to print an article and make some accusations against some people and McGinnis wouldn't let them print it because he was afraid that we would be sued for libel. So, that became a real big issue on campus too. We had made some changes in the policy – prior to all this happening the changes had been made but when all this happened they objected to the changes.

Q – Do you remember that year, the year that all this happened – late 70s?

C – It was still before we moved to the campus. That was before the other issue – the other issue happened after we moved to the new campus.

Q – Oh, this so-called scandal was before the supreme court thing?

C – Yes.

Q – Okay.

C – Ah, well we moved to the new campus and of course we had a ground breaking ceremony and the governor was there –

END OF SIDE ONE